

JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO, CHAIRMAN

PETE RICKETTS, NEBRASKA
DAVID MCCORMICK, PENNSYLVANIA
STEVE DAINES, MONTANA
BILL HAGERTY, TENNESSEE
JOHN BARRASSO, WYOMING
MIKE LEE, UTAH
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
TED CRUZ, TEXAS
RICK SCOTT, FLORIDA
JOHN R. CURTIS, UTAH
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS

JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
TIM Kaine, VIRGINIA
JEFF MERKLEY, OREGON
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Noem,

We write to express our concern for the safety of journalists and employees who work for U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) funded outlets following recent grant terminations for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), Voice of America (VOA), and Open Technology Fund (OTF). While we were heartened to see the Administration reverse course on terminations for RFE/RL and OCB, we understand that the status of many employees at these networks remains in question. If U.S.-based USAGM affiliated personnel's employment were to be terminated, the basis for their presence in the United States would be jeopardized – in many cases forcing them to return to authoritarian countries where they are at risk of being interrogated, jailed, or persecuted. USAGM affiliated personnel based outside of the U.S. could also be placed in jeopardy of a forced return to their authoritarian homelands by their current countries of domicile were their employment to be terminated.

USAGM networks operate in countries without a free press or in countries in transition, and have endeavored to provide accurate, uncensored news to populations living in repressive environments. This work makes USAGM supported networks deeply unpopular in places like the People's Republic of China, Iran, and the Russian Federation. USAGM funded journalism has provided a lifeline to people living under authoritarianism, offering objective reporting and information on American thought and institutions. If journalists doing this vital work are sent back to Beijing, Tehran, Moscow, or other dictatorial environments, their safety and security will be gravely threatened.

USAGM affiliated journalists have worked on stories about regime sponsored torture in Belarus, Uyghur rights in the People's Republic of China, and protests in Hong Kong. Of particular concern would be the safety of journalists who may be forced to return to Afghanistan, Belarus, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Vietnam – especially those affiliated with Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe, and Voice of America. Returning these journalists, who dedicated their lives to working for U.S. supported independent media, would be a gift to authoritarians including Xi Jinping and Aleksander Lukashenko.

JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO, CHAIRMAN

PETE RICKETTS, NEBRASKA
DAVID MCCORMICK, PENNSYLVANIA
STEVE DAINES, MONTANA
BILL HAGERTY, TENNESSEE
JOHN BARRASSO, WYOMING
MIKE LEE, UTAH
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
TED CRUZ, TEXAS
RICK SCOTT, FLORIDA
JOHN R. CURTIS, UTAH
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS

JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
TIM Kaine, VIRGINIA
JEFF MERKLEY, OREGON
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

To protect the safety of U.S. and foreign-based employees who have answered the call to provide unbiased information in despotic and communist environments, we urge you to expeditiously address immigration matters for USAGM affiliated employees, including Prague-based RFE/RL journalists seeking naturalization for themselves, their spouses and minor children under Section 101(a)(27)(M) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Specifically, we hope that as USAGM affiliated employees request adjustment of status or pursue immigration applications, that you will prioritize these matters on a timeline that safeguards them from potential retaliation in their home countries. Moreover, we ask that you continue these employees' visas should their employment status change, allowing them to remain in the United States until such a time as subsequent immigration matters have been resolved.

We request that you provide a briefing to our staff on your plan to protect the safety of these journalists and employees no later than June 6. We stand ready to support your efforts to help those journalists and employees who have demonstrated a commitment to U.S. interests and values.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member